

A BOY I KNEW.

BY LAURENCE HUTTON.

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II.

THE Boy's earliest attempts at versification were found, the other day, in an old desk, and at the end of almost half a century. The copy is in his own boyish, ill-spelled print; and it bears no date. The present owner, his Aunt Henrietta, well remembers the circumstances and the occasion, however, having been an active agent in the acts the poem describes, although she avers that she had no hand in its composition. The original, it seems, was transcribed by The Boy upon the cover of a soap-box, which served as a headstone to one of the graves in his pets' burying-ground, situated in the back-yard of the Hudson Street house, from which he was taken before he was nine years of age. The monument stood against the fence, and this is the legend it bore—rhyme, rhythm, meter, and orthography being carefully preserved:

Three little kitens of our old cat
Were berrid this day in this
 grassplat.
They came to there deth in
 an old water pale,
And after loosing their breth
They were pulled out by
 the tale.
These three little kitins have
 returned to their maker,
And were put in the grave by
 The Boy,
 Undertaker.

At about this period The Boy officiated at the funeral of another cat, but in a somewhat more exalted capacity. It was the Cranes' cat, at Red Hook, a Maltese who always had yellow kittens. The Boy does not remember the cause of the cat's death, but he thinks that Uncle Andrew Knox ran over her, with the "dyspepsia-wagon,"—so called because it had no springs. Anyway, the cat died, and had to be buried.

The grave was dug in the garden of the tavern, near the swinging-gate to the stable, and the whole family attended the services. Jane Purdy, in a deep crape veil, was the chief mourner, The Boy's aunts were pall-bearers, in white scarves, The Boy was the clergyman, while the kittens—who did not look at all like the mother—were on hand in a funeral basket, with black shoestrings tied around their necks. The ceremony was most impressive; the bereaved kittens were loud in their grief; when, suddenly, the village bell tolled for the death of an old gentleman whom everybody loved, and the comedy became a tragedy. The older children were conscience-stricken at the mummery, and they ran, demoralized and shocked, into the house, leaving The Boy and the kittens behind them. Jane Purdy tripped over her veil, and one of the kittens was stepped on in the crush. But The Boy proceeded with the funeral.

Among the many bumps which are still conspicuously absent in The Boy's phrenological development are the bumps of Music and Locality. He whistled as soon as he acquired front teeth; and he has been singing "God Save the Queen" at the St. Andrew's Society dinners, on November the 30th, ever since he came of age. But that is as far as his sense of harmony goes. He took music-lessons for three quarters, and then his mother gave it up in despair. The instrument was a piano. The Boy could not stretch an octave with his right hand, the little finger of which had been broken by a shinny-stick; and he could not do anything whatever with his left hand. He was constantly dropping his bass-notes, which, he said, were "understood." And even Miss Ferguson—most patient of teachers—declared that it was of no use.

The piano to The Boy has been the most offensive of instruments ever since. And when

his mother's old piano, graceful in form, and with curved legs that are still greatly admired, lost its tone, and was transformed into a sideboard,



MUSIC-LESSONS.

he felt, for the first time, that music had charms.

He had to practise half an hour a day, by a thirty-minute sand-glass that could *not* be set ahead; and he shed tears enough over "The Carnival of Venice" to have raised the tide in the Grand Canal. They blurred the sharps and the flats on the music-books — those tears; they ran the crotchets and the quavers together, and, rolling down his cheeks, they even splashed upon his not very clean little hands.

Another serious trial to The Boy was dancing-school. In the first place, he could not turn round without becoming dizzy; in the second place, he could not learn the steps to turn round with; and in the third place, when he did dance, he had to dance with a girl! There was not a boy in all Charraud's, or in all Dodworth's, who could escort a girl back to her

seat, after the dance was over, in better time, or make his "thank-you" bow with less delay. His only voluntary terpsichorean effort at a party was the march to supper; and the only steps he ever took with anything like success were during the promenade in the Lancers. In "hands-all-round" he invariably started with the wrong hand; and if in the set there were girls big enough to wear long dresses, he never failed to tear such out at the gathers. If anybody fell down, it was always The Boy; and if anybody bumped into anybody else, The Boy was always the bumper, unless his partner could hold him up and steer him straight.

Games, at parties, he enjoyed more than dancing, although he did not care very much for "Pillows and Keys," until he became courageous enough to kneel before somebody besides his maiden aunts. "Porter" was less embarrassing, because, when the door was shut, nobody but the little girl who called him out could tell whether he kissed her or not. All this happened a long time ago!

The only social function in which The Boy took any interest whatever was the making of New Year's calls. Not that he cared to make New Year's calls in themselves, but because he wanted to make



A NEW YEAR'S CALL.

more New Year's calls than were made by any other boy. His "list," based upon last year's list, was commenced about February 1; and it contained the names of every person whom The Boy knew or thought he knew, whether that person knew The Boy or not, from Mrs. Penrice, who boarded opposite the Bowling Green, to the Leggats and the Faures, who lived near Washington Parade Ground, the extreme social limit of his city in those days. He usually began by making a formal call upon his own mother, who allowed him to taste the pickled oysters as early as ten in the morning; and he invariably wound up by calling upon Ann Hughes in the kitchen, where he met the soap-fat man, who was above his profession, and likewise the sexton of Ann Hughes's church, who generally came with Billy, the barber on the corner of Franklin Street. There were certain calls The Boy always made with his father, during which he did not partake of pickled oysters; but he had pickled oysters everywhere else; and they never seemed to do him any serious harm. The Boy, if possible, kept his new overcoat until New Year's day—

gave him the bloodstone seal-ring, which, at first, was too big for his little finger,—the only finger on which a seal-ring *could* be worn,—and had to be made temporarily smaller with a piece of string.

When he received, the next New Year, new studs and a scarf-pin,—all bloodstones, to match the ring,—he exhibited no little ingenuity of toilet in displaying them both, because studs are hardly visible when one wears a scarf, unless the scarf is kept out of the perpendicular by stuffing one end of it into the sleeve of a jacket, which requires constant attention and a good deal of bodily contortion.

When The Boy met Johnny Robertson or Joe Stuart making calls, they never recognized each other, except when they were calling together, which did not often occur. It was an important rule in their code to appear as strangers *indoors*, although they would wait for each other outside, and compare lists. When they *did* present themselves collectively in any drawing-room, one boy—usually The Boy's cousin Lew—was detailed to whisper "T. T." when he considered that the proper limit of the call was reached. "T. T." stood for "Time to Travel"; and at the signal all conversation was abruptly interrupted, and the party trooped out in single file. The idea was not original with the boys. It was borrowed from the Hook and Ladder Company, which made all *its* calls in a body, and in two of Kipp and Brown's stages, hired for the entire day. The boys always walked.

The very first time The Boy went out alone he got lost! Told not to go off the block, he walked as far as the corner of Leonard Street, put his arm around the lamp-post, swung himself in a circle, had his head turned the wrong way, and marched off, at a right angle, along the side street, with no home visible anywhere, and not a familiar sign in sight. A ship at sea without a rudder, a solitary wanderer in the Great American Desert without a compass, could not have been more utterly astray. The Boy was so demoralized that he forgot his name and address; and when a kindly policeman picked him up, and carried him over the way to the Leonard Street station-house for identification, he felt as if the end of everything had



READY FOR A NEW YEAR'S CALL.

and he never left it in the hall when he called! He always wore new green kid gloves—why green?—fastened at the wrist with a single hook and eye; and he never took off his kid gloves when he called, except on that particular New Year's day when his Aunt Charlotte

come. It was bad enough to be arrested, but how was he to satisfy his own conscience, and explain matters to his mother, when it was discovered that he had broken his solemn promise, and crossed the street! He had no pocket-handkerchief; and he remembers that he spoiled the long silk streamers of his Glengarry bonnet by wiping his eyes upon them. He was recognized by his Forty-second-plaid gingham frock, a familiar object in the neighborhood, and he was carried back to his parents, who had not had time to miss him, and who, consequently, were not distracted. He lost nothing by the adventure but himself, his self-respect, a pint of tears — and one shoe.

He was afterwards lost in Greenwich Street, having gone there on the step of an ice-cart; and once he was conveyed as far as the Hudson River Railroad Depot, at Chambers Street, on his sled, which he had hitched to the milkman's wagon, and could not untie. This was very serious indeed, for The Boy realized that he had not only lost himself, but his sleigh too. Aunt Henrietta found The Boy sitting disconsolately in front of Wall's bake-shop; but the sleigh did not turn up for several days. It was finally discovered, badly scratched, in the possession of "The Head of the Rovers."

"The Hounds" and "The Rovers" were rival bands of boys, not in The Boy's set, who for many years made outdoor life miserable to The Boy and his friends. They threw stones and mud at each other, and at everybody else; and The Boy was not infrequently blamed for the windows they broke. They punched all the little boys who were better dressed than they were, and they were depraved enough and mean enough to tell the driver every time The Boy or Johnny Robertson attempted to "cut behind."

There was also a band of unattached guerrillas who aspired to be, and often pretended to be, either "Hounds" or "Rovers" — they did not care which. They always hunted in couples, and if they met The Boy alone, they asked him to which of the organizations he himself belonged. If he said he was a "Rover," they claimed to be "Hounds," and pounded him. If he declared himself in sympathy with the "Hounds," they hoisted the

"Rovers'" colors, and punched him again. If he disclaimed both associations, they punched him anyway, on general principles. "The Head of the Rovers" was subsequently killed, in front of Tom Riley's liberty-pole in Franklin Street, in a firemen's riot, and "The Chief of the Hounds," who had a club-foot, became a respectable egg-merchant, with a stand in Washington Market, near the Root-beer Woman's place of business, on the south side. The Boy met two of the gang near the Desbrosses Street Ferry only the other day; but they did not recognize The Boy.

The only spot where The Boy felt really safe from the interference of these clans was in St. John's Square, that delightful oasis in the desert of brick and mortar and cobblestones which was known as the Fifth Ward. It was a private inclosure, bounded on the north by Laight Street, on the south by Beach Street, on the east by Varick Street, and on the west by Hudson Street; and its site is now occupied by the great freight-warehouses of the New York Central and Hudson River Railroad Company.

In the "fifties," and long before, it was a private park, to which only the property-owners in its immediate neighborhood had access. It possessed fine old trees, winding gravel walks, and meadows of grass. In the center was a fountain, whereupon, in the proper season, the children were allowed to skate on both feet, which was a great improvement over the one-foot gutter-slides outside. The park was surrounded by a high iron railing, broken here and there by massive gates, to which The Boy had a key. But he always climbed over. It was a point of etiquette, in The Boy's set, to climb over on all occasions, whether the gates were unlocked or not. And The Boy, many a time, has been known to climb over a gate, although it stood wide open! He not infrequently tore his clothes on the sharp spikes by which the gates were surmounted; but that made no difference to The Boy — until he went home!

The Boy once had a fight in the park, with Bill Rice, about a certain lignum-vitæ peg-top, of which The Boy was very fond, and which Bill Rice kicked into the fountain. The Boy got mad, which was wrong and foolish of The Boy; and The Boy, also, got licked. And The Boy

never could make his mother understand why he was silly and careless enough to cut his under lip by knocking it against Bill Rice's knuckles. Bill subsequently apologized by saying that he did not mean to kick the top into the fountain. He merely meant to kick the top. And it was all made up.

The Boy did not fight much. His nose was too long. It seemed that he could not reach the end of it with his fists when he fought; and that the other fellows could always reach it with theirs, no matter how far out or how

the autumn and winter months; for he could then gather "smoking-beans" and horse-chestnuts; and he could roam at will all over the grounds without any hateful warning to "Keep Off the Grass."

The old gardener, generally a savage defender of the place, who had no sense of humor as it was exhibited in boy nature, sometimes let the boys rake the dead leaves into great heaps and make bonfires of them, if the wind happened to be in the right direction. And then what larks! The bonfire was a house on

fire, and the great garden-roller, a very heavy affair, was "Engine No. 42," with which the boys ran to put the fire out. They all shouted as loudly and as unnecessarily as real firemen did; the foreman gave his orders through a real trumpet, and one boy had a real fireman's hat with "Engine No. 42" on it. He was chief engineer, but he did not run with the



ST. JOHN'S CHURCH AND PARK.

scientifically his left arm was extended. It was "One, two, three—and recover"—on The Boy's nose! The Boy was a good runner. His legs were the only part of his anatomy which seemed to him as long as his nose. And his legs saved his nose in many a fierce encounter.

The Boy first had daily admission to St. John's Park after the family moved to Hubert Street, and The Boy was about ten years old; and for half a decade or more it was his happy hunting-ground—when he was not kept in school! It was a particularly pleasant place in

machine: not because he was chief engineer, but because while in active motion he could not keep his hat on. It was his father's hat, and its extraordinary weight was considerably increased by the wads of newspaper packed in the lining to make it fit. The chief engineer held the position for life, on the strength of the hat, which he would not lend to anybody else. The rest of the company were elected, *virà voce*, every time there was a fire. This entertainment came to an end, like everything else, when the gardener chained the roller to the

tool-house, after Bob Stuart fell under the machine and was rolled so flat that he had to be

The Boy was put out once by a crack on the ear, which put The Boy out very much.

"The Hounds" and "The Rovers" challenged "The Columbias" repeatedly. But that was looked upon simply as an excuse to get into the park, and the challenges were never accepted. The challengers were forced to content themselves with running off with the balls which went over the fence: which made home runs through that medium very unpopular and very expensive. In the whole history of "The Hounds" and "The Rovers" nothing that they pirated was ever returned but The Boy's sled.

Contemporary with the Columbia Base-ball Club was the Phrenoskian Society, a "mind-cultivating" association, organized by the undergraduates of McElligott's School, in Greene Street. The Boy, as usual, was secretary when he was not treasurer. The object was "debates," but all the debating was done at the business meetings, and no mind ever became sufficiently cultivated to master the intricacies of parliamentary law. The members called it a Secret Society, and on their jackets they wore, as conspicuously as possible, a badge-

pin consisting of a blue enameled circlet containing Greek letters in gold. In a very short time the badge



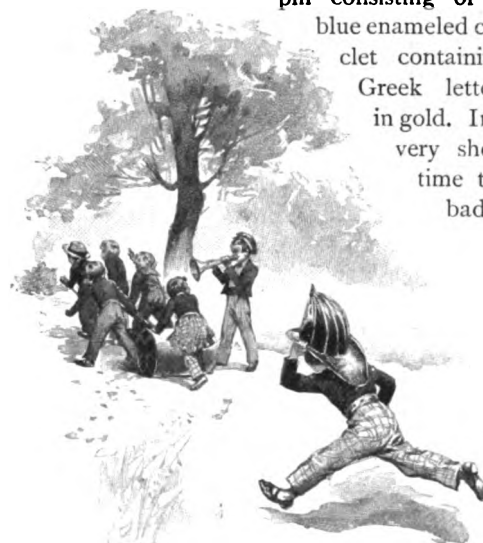
"THE BOY ALWAYS CLIMBED OVER."

carried home on a stretcher made of overcoats tied together by the sleeves.

That is the only recorded instance in

which the boys, particularly Bob, left the park without climbing over. And the bells sounded a "general alarm." The dent made in the path by Bob's body was on exhibition until the next snow-storm.

The favorite amusements in the park were shinny, base-ball, one-old-cat, and fires. The Columbia Base-ball Club was organized in 1853 or 1854. It had nineteen members, and The Boy was secretary and treasurer. The uniform consisted chiefly of a black leather belt with the initials C. B. B. C. in white letters, hand painted, and generally turned the wrong way. The first base was an ailantus tree; the second base was another ailantus tree; the third base was a buttonball tree; the home base was a marble headstone, brought for that purpose from an old burying-ground not far away; and "over the fence" was a home run. A player was caught out on the second bounce, and he was "out" if hit by a thrown ball as he ran.



THE CHIEF ENGINEER OF "ENGINE NO. 42."

was all that was left of the society; but to this day the secret of the society has never been disclosed. No one ever knew, or will ever know, what the Greek letters stood for—not even the members themselves.

(To be continued.)